

June 27, 2015

7 by Val Smith-Orr

The number 7 (seven) has become very a significant number in my life this year. It is 7 days until the end of the Australian tax year; it represents the number of volunteers that have come to my clinic since January 2015; it is the number of weeks I have just been told to expect to wait before any garbage can be collected as the local landfill is full; and tragically it represents the number of children under two years old who have died in local hospitals from burns. The last baby, a boy, was just nine months old and left this earth, we hope to a better place, on June 10th. He died because the hospital he was admitted to didn't have the correct size tubes to intubate him, nor was there access to any life support. He had aspirated (choked) in hospital on breast milk that was given to him whilst he was lying flat on his back (which was badly burned). The cause of the burn was a fire which started when a candle which was being used as a nightlight fell over on plastic chest of drawers, setting it and the mosquito net around the bed the family shared alight. Storms had outed the power supply.

Triple B Care Projects, Inc. was asked to help this child two days after the accident, when the distraught father came to our clinic. The child was comatose when we attended him. Oxygen was being delivered at 15ltrs/min via a tube with an index card that was rolled into a cone shape since there were no pediatric O2 masks available for the parents to buy. We had taken one with us. The parents had basic Phil-health medical insurance; the father being employed as a cleaner, earning 2200 pesos (\$65 AUD) every 15 days. The Government hospital staff tried to transfer the child to a private hospital where there were limited life support facilities, but its administrators demanded a 20 thousand peso cash deposit (\$590 AUD) before admission, so transfer there was out of the question.

I believe the burn the child sustained was healable with appropriate international standard burns treatments offered by my clinic here in Zambales; whose priority is children under 5 years old.

I was given a copy of a 2012 women's magazine and read that a well-known USA TV reality show actress' husband had paid \$44 thousand USD for a Hermes handbag. Dionesia Paquiao, was also bought a Hermes bag by her Philippine boxer son, Manny, at a similar cost. That was lost so he replaced it. The cost of those three bags comes approx. \$132 thousand USD, \$170 AUD, approx. 5.8million pesos. That is the amount need to build a basic burns treatment & rehab facility here in Zambales. Just three Hermes handbags. Seven Hermes handbags would enable us to include an operating theatre for early skin grafting. A Hermes handbag a year would enable us to continue to give free treatments to the poverty stricken children that come to us for help with burns each year. Currently we have funds which approximate to half a Hermes handbag.